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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 001035

SIPDIS
STATE PLEASE PASS TO PM/WRA (ED TRIMAKAS)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/12/15
TAGS: PREL MASS PGOV MCAP KHDP EC PE
SUBJECT: GOE REQUEST FOR DEMINING ASSISTANCE PRESENTS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

REF: STATE 122324; QUITO 997; QUITO 708

CLASSIFIED BY: Heather M. Hodges, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ecuadorian government seeks USG assistance in its humanitarian demining program. After years of inconclusive discussion with the GOE, the MFA's recent requests for USG assistance, combined with extension of the GOE's commitment to the Ottawa Convention, increasingly close political ties with Peru, and unique role of the USG as guarantor of the Peace Accord between Ecuador and Peru present an opportunity to advance a beneficial program with the GOE. Cooperation and work with Ecuador in demining is already paying dividends in access to destruction of MANPADS and other munitions. Embassy Quito invites the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (WRA) to visit Ecuador to assess Ecuador's humanitarian demining needs and opportunities for potential assistance and cooperation. END SUMMARY

REQUESTS FOR USG ASSISTANCE

¶2. (SBU) In a diplomatic note dated September 10, and a detailed e-mail response to Embassy questions received on December 3, the MFA has asked that the USG renew its financial assistance to Ecuador's humanitarian demining program. The GOE's request for USG assistance is to help cover the operating costs for its 2010 humanitarian demining program, \$500,000 of which is dependent upon international donors

¶3. (C) The Department of State provided \$1,623,985 to the Organization of American States' Office of Humanitarian Mine Action for Ecuador from 2001 to 2005, with almost \$264,000 in 2005. Since then, the USG provided a Tempest machine which was on loan for more than two years from the Humanitarian Demining Research and Development Program at Fort Belvoir. In addition, the U.S. Southern Command's Humanitarian Mine Action program via the Embassy's Military Group has committed \$100,000 in infrastructure and \$70,000 in equipment upgrades to the GOE's demining school, and annually provides demining training to the GOE's military. Former Director General of Sovereignty Affairs and Director of Ecuador's Demining Center (CENDESMI) Bolivar Torres publicly expressed

gratitude on repeated occasions for this recent assistance.

GOE BUDGET

¶4. (SBU) The September 10 diplomatic note states that the GOE's annual cost to continue its humanitarian demining program is approximately \$1.5 million, at least through 2012. Beginning in 2009, approximately \$1 million has been funded annually by the GOE, leaving an additional \$500,000 required from international donors. For its 2010 humanitarian program operations, the GOE has received only slightly more than \$116,000 from Belgium, leaving \$384,000 of assistance needed to complete the GOE's operating budget. In the five prior years, the GOE received considerably more in annual international contributions, ranging from \$201,000 to \$882,000.

¶5. (C) In addition to the above, the GOE has received pledges for the provision of equipment and materials from Japan at a value of approximately \$500,000, an excavator from Germany worth approximately \$137,000, and the USG has informally agreed to lend sifting equipment (cernidor) that would complement the excavator for the Rio Chira demining effort in Zapotillo, Ecuador. (Note: These other contributions will help improve the efficiency of Ecuador's demining operations but do not actually reduce the GOE's operating costs. End Note.)

¶6. (C) During a presidential summit in Piura, Peru, on October 22, 2009, Ecuador President Rafael Correa and Peru President Alan Garcia reiterated a commitment to create a seed fund, with a pledged contribution from each country of \$2 million. This seed fund would be deposited eventually into an escrow account with the Andean Growth Corporation, and will serve as a basis for promoting additional international support for the demining programs of both countries. (Note: The commitment to this seed fund was originally signed by the two presidents on October 25, 2008, during a summit in Machala, Ecuador, marking the ten-year anniversary of the 1998 peace agreement. It is unclear when and if this seed fund will actually be implemented. End Note.)

GOE DEMINING GOALS

¶7. (SBU) The diplomatic note clarifies that full funding of the GOE's demining program would allow the GOE to complete the following activities in 2010: the clearing of ten mined zones; removal and destruction of 848 antipersonnel mines; sweeping of 27,890 square meters (m^2) in Tiwintza Canton, 10,000 m^2 in Zapotillo Canton, and 12,500 m^2 in the Zapotillo and Chira river sector; implementation of educational programs regarding the danger of antipersonnel mines in 31 border communities in the El Oro and Loja provinces; and the completion of impact studies in the Morona-Santiago and Zamora-Chinchipe provinces.

¶8. (SBU) Longer term, the GOE's goals are to clear all remaining mined areas by 2017, provide safe access to Tiwintza, implement a preventative educational campaign, assist 70 victims, incorporate training into the final destruction of 1000 mines currently in storage, avoid degradation of biodiversity in the southern border region, and integrate development programs into the demined areas.

GOE HUMANITARIAN DEMINING MANAGEMENT

¶9. (SBU) Ecuador's National Humanitarian Demining Center

(CENDESMI), established on September 22, 1999, still manages Ecuador's demining program. However, an ongoing reorganization of Ecuador's Foreign Ministry changed the leadership of CENDESMI. While it had been led since its inception by the MFA's Directorate General of Sovereignty, CENDESMI was placed under the supervision of the Directorate General of Border Relations with Peru in November 2009.

¶10. (SBU) CENDESMI is a multi-agency organization led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in conjunction with the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Health, Ecuadorian Agency of International Cooperation (AGECI), and the Demining General Command (CGD).

¶11. (SBU) The CGD is an organic entity of the Ecuadorian Army's Corps of Engineers, and is in charge of managing all of Ecuador's demining operations and Ecuador's demining school. The CGD increased the number of its soldiers from 60 to 100 in October ¶2009.

STATUS OF ECUADOR'S DEMINING PROGRAM

¶12. (SBU) In November 2008, the GOE and Government of Peru received an eight year extension to fulfill their obligations under the Ottawa Convention to complete the destruction of their anti-personnel mines by 2017. The MFA states that as of December 3, 2009, Ecuador still had approximately 5,786 mines to be destroyed (5,758 anti-personnel and 28 anti-tank) of the 10,910 mines originally planted along its southern border. According to information from the OAS' Comprehensive Action Against Anti-Personnel Mines (AICMA), these mines are localized in an area of approximately 499,200 m², in 74 distinct areas along the southern provinces of El Oro, Loja, Zamora-Chinchipe, Morona-Santiago and Pastaza. The Embassy has sent separately to PM/WRA tables showing previously demined areas and the types of mines per province.

BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH PERU

¶13. (C) Ecuador's relations with Peru have steadily improved since the Peace Accord. Former head of CENDESMI Bolivar Torres called demQng "the most important confidence building mechanism between the two countries."

¶14. (SBU) Subsequent to the signing of the Peace Accord between Ecuador and Peru on October 26, 1998, bilateral cooperation began on an operational level, with demining activities along the border area. Since 2003, both countries have conducted joint demining operations in the El Oro-Tubes and Loja-Piura sectors. Since October 2006, Ecuadorian and Peruvian demining units have conducted simultaneous parallel operations along their common border in the Cordillera del Condor region, near the Shirumsa-Chiqueiza border marker.

¶15. (SBU) Since 2007, Ecuador and Peru formalized their demining cooperation with the creation of bilateral mechanisms, including biannual meetings between CENDESMI and CONTRAMINAS (Peru's mine action authority), and have conducted joint training and participated in multilateral fora. Coordination of demining activities is conducted via a bilateral mechanism called the "2 plus 2", in which members of CENDESMI and CONTRAMINAS, and the foreign and defense ministries, meet. Bilateral summits between presidents Correa and Garcia also have provided impetus to initiatives such as the Bilateral Commission of Measures to Promote

Mutual Confidence and Security, which meets annually and includes a discussion of humanitarian demining issues.

¶16. (SBU) In February 2009, Ecuadorian and Peruvian demining unit commanders signed the Seventh Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen cooperation. The MOU established specific areas for clearance, provided for periodic information exchanges, exchange of equipment, bilateral working meetings and joint terrain reconnaissance, and defined a combined medical evacuation and treatment plan.

GOE RECEPTIVITY TO CONTRACTORS

¶17. (C) The GOE stated in its December 3 response to the Embassy's request for additional information that the GOE's demining program is "transparent", but did not clarify whether contractors would be accepted to implement any new cooperation/USG-funded activities. The response stated that all demining activities have been

conducted by its CDG. (Comment: Embassy believes that the GOE would be receptive to the inclusion of third party contractors as long as the Demining General Command (CGD) is trained and involved in the process, as was the GOE's response regarding the use of contractors for the destruction of munitions during PM/WRA's Mark Adams' August 28 meeting visit to Ecuador (Ref C). GOE acceptance would require a clear explanation of the GOE's role in the process and could be discussed during an assessment visit. End Comment.)

¶18. (C) Former head of CENDESMI Torres told the Embassy in October 2009 that Ecuador considered multilateral participation essential in maintaining confidence between Ecuador and Peru's demining efforts. The GOE's demining program has been implemented primarily through its CDG in cooperation with AICMA since 2001. The Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) has coordinated a team of international monitors who compose the Assistance Mission for Mine Clearance in South America (MARMINAS) and supported Ecuador and Peru's demining operations since 2003.

OPPORTUNITY TO HIGHLIGHT USG COMMITMENT

¶19. (C) The USG's role in the peace process between Ecuador and Peru following the Cenepa War was unique and still provides opportunities for trilateral engagement. The U.S. was one of the guarantors that helped achieve the Brasilia (Itamaraty) Peace Accord of October 26, 1998, which formally ended hostilities between Peru and Ecuador. The innovative solution for Tiwintza as part of the Accord (i.e., privately owned land of one state, inside another's territory) still has important international precedence and ramifications, but the commitment to provide mine-free access to the land has not been fulfilled.

¶20. (C) During the November 10 U.S-Ecuador Bilateral Dialogue in Washington, the GOE suggested that humanitarian demining would be a positive area for cooperation (Ref A), reiterated by the MFA Under Secretary of Bilateral Affairs Leonardo Arizaga to the Ambassador on November 22 (Ref B). A recommitment of U.S. assistance to Ecuador's humanitarian demining program offers an opportunity to underscore the USG's commitment to the Ecuadorian people and provide leverage with the GOE. Renewing assistance in humanitarian demining would also allow the Embassy to highlight publicly that the USG is fulfilling its commitments as one of the guarantors of the 1988 peace treaty.

REQUEST FOR ASSESSMENT VISIT BY PM/WRA

¶21. (C) The Embassy would welcome a visit by PM/WRA in early 2010 to perform an assessment of Ecuador's humanitarian demining program needs, as well as the GOE's receptivity to direct assistance and use of contractors. The Embassy will follow up with the MFA to confirm appropriate visit dates. In addition to this request for funds from PM/WRA, the Embassy will also coordinate with U.S. Southern Command regarding ongoing assistance in training, equipment and facility upgrades.

¶22. (U) POCs for this request are Embassy Quito Political-Military Officer Mark Pannell, telephone: 011-593-2-398-5502, e-mail: PannellMA@state.sgov.gov, or Military Group Commander COL Robert Gaddis, telephone: 011-593-2-398-5387, e-mail: Robert.Gaddis@tcsc.southcom.smil.mil.

HODGES